



Lower Yosemite Fall Project

Archeology in the Lower Yosemite Fall Area

What is the Lower Yosemite Fall Project?

The Lower Yosemite Fall Project consists of a series of re-landscaping, removal, restoration, and reconstruction projects at one of Yosemite Valley's most popular natural destination areas. This improvement project will

- Enhance a world-class visitor experience;
- Create a loop trail system, including a trail to the base of Lower Yosemite Fall which is fully accessible to people with mobility impairments;
- Reduce the perception of crowding and congestion at the main views and along the trail; and
- Improve the hydrology of the braided stream system by replacing narrow bridges that restrict the natural stream flow.

Currently underway, this is the first major improvement project to begin after the approval of the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. Financial support for this project comes from a partnership between the National Park Service and The Yosemite Fund, a nonprofit park partner that is the primary fundraising organization for Yosemite National Park.

Why are archeologists involved in this project and what are they doing?

The Lower Yosemite Fall area is rich in human history dating back thousands of years. The National Park Service conducts data recovery excavations to lessen the impact of construction activities, and to retrieve information that would otherwise be lost.

Throughout the month of October, archeologists will be excavating at three sites. One of these is the remains of an Indian village estimated to date from 3,500 years ago. The second is at the site of the homes of James Mason Hutchings and Gabriel Sovulewski, early non-Indian settlers of Yosemite Valley. Archeologists will also be conducting fieldwork at the site of the Indian village *Koom-i-ne*, first occupied about 2,500 years ago.

What role have Indian groups played in this project?

Three Native American groups culturally associated with the park consulted with the National Park Service in the development of this project. If human remains were to be inadvertently discovered, formal consultations with these groups would commence, as prescribed by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

Archeological excavations can be controversial to some individuals and groups. During the life of this project, a representative from the Native American community will be present on site.